

INTRODUCTION

The quality of family relations influence human's further psychosocial development. Parental psychological control applies to a parenting attitude which involves practices aimed to make children think, behave or feel in parentally approved ways.

An inadequate level of control in family relations is closely linked with the occurrence of socio-emotional difficulties in childhood (Peleg-Popko & Klingman, 2002).

Previous studies showed significant associations between controlling parenting practices and internalizing problems (Creveling et al., 2010) such as depressive symptoms and anxiety in childhood and adolescence (Cole & McPherson, 1993, Kim et al., 2008).

Anxieties experienced at the level of parent-child relationships are prone to be transferred to social situations (Borelli et al., 2010), which in turn has a negative impact on the quality of peer relationships. Moreover, children who are highly controlled by their parents experience difficulties in fulfilling school demands, have lower self-esteem and show tendencies to isolate themselves from others which can turn into social phobia.

STUDY AIMS

1. High levels of parental control are expected to be linked positively to children's depression, anxiety and social phobia.
2. Gender differences occur in the association between parental control and psychosocial functioning.

METHOD

Participants

306 Polish children
58% female, 42% male
8 to 13 years old ($M = 11$; $SD = 1.18$)

Measures

Parental control was assessed using Restrictiveness scale (12 items) of the *Computerized Family Relations Test* – CFRT by Skoczeń et al. (2015). The response scale is continuous; with the use of a specially designed slider bar that is similar to a thermometer, the child is asked to indicate the extent to which he or she agrees that the item is applicable to each parent, ranking from totally agree (top scale) to totally disagree (bottom scale) as shown in Fig. 1.



Figure 1. A print screen of the CFRT

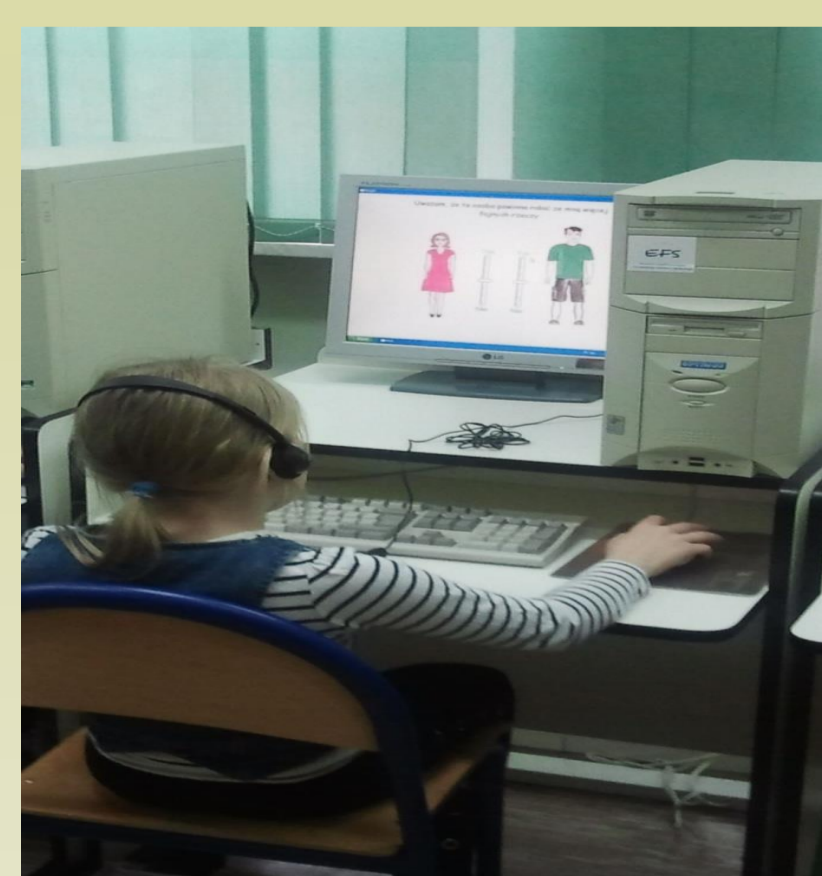


Figure 2. A female participant taking CFRT

Children's social phobia, depression and anxiety was assessed with the *Revised Children's Depression and Anxiety Scale* – RCADS by Chorpita et al. (2000). Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale (0 = *never* to 3 = *always*). Exemplar questions include: „I feel sad or empty”, „I worry about things”, „I worry I might look foolish”.

RESULTS

To assess the link between parental control, children's depression, anxiety and social phobia bivariate Pearson correlations (Tab. 1) and analysis of stepwise regression were carried out (Tab. 2), for relations with mothers, fathers, sons and daughters separately.

Table 1. Correlation matrix for study variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Social Phobia	1				
2 Depression	.57**	1			
3 Anxiety	.63**	.58**	1		
4 Control (M)	.37**	.39**	.29**	1	
5 Control (F)	.37**	.32**	.28**	.79**	1

Note: ** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed), M = mother, F = father.

Positive two-way correlations were found between parental control and children's social phobia, depression and anxiety. A strongest correlation was observed between maternal control and depression ($r = .39$), paternal control and social phobia ($r = .37$).

Table 2. Stepwise regression analysis for sons and daughters

Model	Social Phobia			Depression			Anxiety		
	Adj. R ²	β	p	Adj. R ²	β	p	Adj. R ²	β	p
♂ SONS									
Control (M)		-.02	.92	.12	.35	.00	.08	.29	.00
Control (F)	.09	.32	.00		-.03	.86		.15	.35
♀ DAUGHTERS									
Control (M)	.19	.26	.01	.17	.42	.00	.09	.30	.00
Control (F)	.20	.23	.03		.09	.42		.16	.16

Note: M = mother, F = father.

For **sons** maternal control was a strong predictor of depression ($F_{(1,122)} = 17.25$, $p < .01$) and anxiety ($F_{(1,122)} = 11.09$, $p < .01$). Paternal control was only found to be a significant predictor in terms of social phobia ($F_{(1,122)} = 13.41$, $p < .01$).

For **daughters** maternal control predicted social phobia ($F_{(1,175)} = 40.39$, $p = .01$), depression ($F_{(1,171)} = 36.15$, $p < .01$), and anxiety ($F_{(1,171)} = 16.99$, $p < .01$). Paternal control was found to be a predictor of social phobia only ($F_{(2,170)} = 23$, $p = .03$).

DISCUSSION

This study illustrates a positive association between perceived parental control and children's psychosocial functioning.

Results showed that high levels of control in the **son-mother relation** predicted the occurrence of depression and anxiety. High levels of control in the **son-father relation** was a strong predictor of social phobia.

In the **daughter-mother relation** high levels of control was positively associated with all three types of problems, i.e. social phobia, depression, anxiety with the highest scores for depression. In the **daughter-father relation** high levels of control were only positively associated with social phobia. No significant associations for the remaining two difficulties were found. To summarize, maternal control is more linked to depression and anxiety, whereas paternal control is a stronger predictor of social phobia.

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